

QC Circle Activities and Prof. Kaoru Ishikawa

Mr. Katsuya Hosotani

Introduction

As kindly introduced by the MC, I am Hosotani. Dr. Kano requested to me to make presentations with the title, "QC Circle Activities and Dr. Kaoru Ishikawa." I was engaged in the advent of the first QC circle and I learned from Prof. Ishikawa from the beginning, so I would like to talk about QC circle activities in relation to Prof. Ishikawa and his excellent track record.

Motivation behind the publication of *Genba to QC* magazine

Apologies if I may skip some of my slides since time is limited. As you know, at the time the first QC circle was established in 1950, JUSE had already started to publish a magazine called *Hinshitsu Kanri* (Statistical Quality Control). The magazine decided to have roundtable discussion with a group of foremen because they expressed a desire to learn about quality control. *Hinshitsu Kanri* (Statistical Quality Control) was a monthly magazine that mainly focused on statistical quality control targeting managers. It was too difficult for foremen to understand.

Preparation for the publication of *Genba to QC* magazine

Prof. Ishikawa wanted to improve QC activities on the shop floor. Therefore, he decided to publish *Genba to QC* magazine which was started in April, 1962. At the same time, he also decided to create quality control circles, and these QC circles started to use this magazine to improve the shop floor. Prof. Ishikawa was the chief editor and the photo on the cover page of the first issue is the Zama plant of Nissan Motors, which shows the line on their shop floor.

Upon publication of the first issue

In the first issue, Prof. Ishikawa mentioned that it was the time for companywide QC, and especially the people on the shop floor have to act in a central role for quality control. Quality control has to be led by the people on the shop floor and they have to be responsible for the quality and QA of the company. He really promoted QC activities deeply rooted on the shop floor. So that was the origin of QC circles.

Two aims to form a QC Circle

Before publishing the first issue in 1962, he also published the experiences of several foremen and their QC activities. He believed that people on the shop floor have to be involved in the quality control activities from the beginning. In the United States at that time, professionals led QC activities; however, in Japanese-style quality control, QC activities are led by the shop floor people. That was his belief. So a group has to be formed to learn about QC methods and after learning QC methods the participants will practice those methods on the shop floor. “Sailors on a table or a straw mat will not be useful; they have to jump into the water.” That is what he said to me. That was Prof. Ishikawa’s style.

Objectives of QC Circle activity at that time, and its systematic organization

The purpose and basic principles of QC circles were established. First, the management capability of the front-line supervisors has to be improved and they have to work as the core of the QC activities in the company. That was what he believed. That is the origin of QC circles. In May 1962, the same year that *Genba to QC* magazine was first published, the QC circle headquarters was established to assist the organization. However, he thought that a headquarters alone would not be enough to promote QC circles; therefore, he began pushing to establish regional chapters.

In September 1964, four regional chapters were founded including ones in Kanto, Kinki, Tokai, and Hokuriku. The first presidents of the QC circle regional chapters were the presidents of the four major companies in the region. Those regional chapters were established on a prefectural basis, and then sectional chapters were created underneath those, so we soon had about 37 sections and each section had a president, a vice president, honorary advisors and advisers, and so forth.

According to what I heard, Prof. Ishikawa talked with Ms. Haruko Mitsuaki, who was the secretariat of the QC circle headquarters, and asked her to create regional chapters. They made a research on an organization of the Japanese Army and Soka Gakkai, which is a powerful religious movement at that time, to create regional chapters. These were voluntary activities and QC circles and companies worked together, which is something quite unique and specific to QC circles.

Registration system to the QC Circle headquarters

Then, we also decided to establish a registration system for QC circles and we created a form. In May 1962, Matsuyama Carrier Communication Department Machine Circle of Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Public Corporation registered as the first

circle. They were working at Matsuyama in Shikoku and this was the group managing the use of microwaves for communication. Manabe-san was the leader and the circle had a total of six members. He later wrote about his experience of registering the circle in the *Nikkei Business Daily* newspaper. He said that when he went into a bookstore he saw *Genba to QC* magazine and he found a registration form in the magazine by accident. Then, he sent a registration form to JUSE and his circle happened to be the very first one. I had the chance to work with him and at that time we had 300,000 people working in Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Public Corporation, and within NTT, many study groups were formed. There were so many system breakdowns and complaints coming from customers that time, and many small groups were formed to improve and cope with the situation. Manabe-san thought that QC circles would help that situation.

Meaning of registration (Dr. Ishikawa's quote)

Dr. Ishikawa continued actively promoting QC circle registration. After the registration, each circle and its leader was published in the magazine, which became open to public, and officially recognized in society, And after registration, they started to have very strong determination for quality.

Holding the QC Convention for Foremen

In 1962, Prof. Ishikawa also started the first QC Convention for Foremen. The convention was for three days but we were worried that companies probably would not allow their foremen to make such a long business trip so we thought that maybe 200 participates would attend. However, we had 400 people for the convention with the number of activity case presentations, a lot more than the two or three we initially expected. In the second year, in 1963, we held this convention in the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce with a maximum capacity of 900; however, 950 people applied to attend the convention. In the third year, we held the conference in Yomiuri Hall and had 1,300 applications where 160 cases were presented. From the beginning, we had wanted to use Hibiya Kokaido Hall which can accommodate 2,060 people, as the venue and in 1965 our dream came true. Prof. Ishikawa always mentioned that the foremen on the shop floor should not be ignorant of the real world. They have to come out and mingle with other foremen.

Holding the first QC Circle Convention

In May 1963, we held the first QC Circle Convention in Sendai. This is a photo of

the first QC Circle Convention in Sendai, in which a speaker is making his presentation. Rather than having the same number or the same name for each QC Circle Convention each year, Prof. Ishikawa decided to have a serial number for all of the QC circle conventions, held by headquarters, regional chapters, and sectional chapters. By 2015, we held a total of 5,788 QC circle conventions with 3 million participants.

Holding the first All Japan QC Circle competition

Next, Prof. Ishikawa thought about holding an All Japan QC Circle Competition, in which representatives of each regional chapter came to Tokyo and made a presentation. A gold medal and silver medal were given to the winners. So far, we have held the conference 44 times and the cumulative number of participants has reached almost 60,000. This is a photo of the first All Japan QC circle competition. At that time we didn't have digital cameras so it is not a very good quality photo, but those are the presenters with Prof. Ishikawa. We took this group photo on the stage and this is a tradition that we have always kept. In the back row, you can see the judges and the advisors for the regional chapters.

Establishing a QC Circle Song

Around 1965, the activities of the regional chapters had flourished and the number of QC circle activities was enhanced so much that they wanted to have their own official song. The *Genba to QC* magazine started a competition asking for lyrics for a song and Mr. Suzuki of Honshu Paper won the competition. Although the lyrics could be made by a layperson, it was difficult for a layperson to compose the music, so Prof. Masuda of Kunitachi College of Music was introduced to us by NHK and he became the song's composer. Prof. Matsuda came up with two types of music, one a Japanese traditional dance and the other a march. All of the members of the editorial committee voted but the vote was a draw. Prof. Ishikawa had to choose a winner. Since Prof. Ishikawa was not good at singing, he finally selected the march and this song is still sung at the farewell party at the end of QC circle conventions. This tradition continues to this day so the contents are still fresh.

Nikkei QC Literature Prize

The Deming Prize Committee selects books and papers that give a remarkable contribution to the progress of quality control and presents the Nikkei QC Literature Prize every year, in November. With Prof. Ishikawa's very strong insistence, it was a practice that one of papers from *Genba to QC* magazine was selected for the prize up

until 1989, but since only three or four books/papers were awarded the prize each year, we decided not to continue this practice.

Foundation of FQC Award and QC Circle Kaoru Ishikawa Award

Instead, for the QC circles, we decided to select excellent case studies related to QC circles and to present the FQC Award, named after the *FQC* magazine which was originally *Genba to QC* magazine. After Prof. Ishikawa passed away, we asked his wife for permission to change the name to “QC Circle Kaoru Ishikawa Award”. This is the award that is presented to the circles that commend good QC circle activities and contribute to improve the level of QC circle activities. Award recipients are given a handsome shield, curved with Prof. Ishikawa’s face. As of September 2015, we have presented 258 FQC Awards and 1,024 QC Circle Kaoru Ishikawa Awards. This award is a very good prize to receive.

Publication of *QC Circle Koryo* (General Principles of the QC Circle) and *How to Operate QC Circle*

In around 1970, QC circles became very famous and every group activity was called QC circle activity, but that was really a misunderstanding so we wanted to make a platform for QC circle and a textbook for QC circle activities. Dr. Imaizumi from NKK and Mr. Sugimoto from Toshiba were the core players for this activity in those days. Prof. Ishikawa supervised this activity to publish the official QC circle platform, titled *QC Circle Koryo* (General Principles of the QC Circle). You have to respect the basics and you shouldn’t deviate from the basics. That was the gist of what Prof. Ishikawa taught us. That’s why we published *QC Circle Koryo*, which name later changed to *Fundamentals of QC Circles*, to describe what QC circle activities actually are.

After that, in 1971, a book titled *How to operate QC Circle* was published as well.

We took turns to divide our responsibilities and to come up with ideas. In those days, hotels were very expensive but we had to stay overnight at some places. But since Japan Steel and NKK were involved, and they used to have dormitories and big conference halls, we used to camp there. We stayed overnight and we discussed the contents of the publication. Prof. Ishikawa really liked thorough discussions and to create certain things and he acted as the coordinator for the discussions. He was very good at that. I think your memory of Prof. Ishikawa will be the same if you have ever joined this kind of discussion. These books were also translated into English.

Foundation of QC Circle Cruising Seminar

Then we had a new idea about a cruising seminar and in June, 1971, the very first QC Circle Cruising Seminar was held. They launched from Yokohama and went to Keelung, then Hong Kong, and then came back to Yokohama. It was a total of 14 days of cruising. A second cruising seminar was planned as well; however, because of the oil crisis around that time, we had to refrain from holding this cruising seminar. Instead, we went to Wakayama prefecture and held the first QC Circle Summer School at Mt. Koya. Since 1973, once or twice a year, twice a year maximum, we have held this cruising seminar. This was, in fact, the University for QC circles as this is the highest level of education for QC circles. In English, we called it QC Circle Cruising Seminar, so it was called the QCCCS, but because there are three C's we started to call it Q-“ji”-S. This is the brochure from the second cruising seminar. This is a picture from the first seminar. We took two weeks for the seminar. This is a picture taken on the pier at the port of Yokohama at their departure. All the people from the companies are on the deck together to say goodbye to all those people. They used to have uniforms at that time; T-shirts with blue pants for men and skirts for women. We used to have hats too. These are photos from after they departed. This is the second one, and this is a sports meet they held. This was the second seminar and I was there too. This is me. I was very young.

This is the news about Prof. Ishikawa on board. The original plan was to go to Shanghai, Taiwan, and Hong Kong that year; however, because of the political turmoil in Shanghai, all of a sudden the destination was changed to Okinawa. In those days, you didn't need a visa to go to Okinawa, so we went to Okinawa instead. Prof. Ishikawa always used to take an airplane on the way out but on the way back he was onboard the ship. That meant that he was onboard the ship for seven days. He was onboard the ship from Okinawa that time. Onboard, he said that mutual enlightenment each other is very important for QC Circle, and camping opportunity like this is very meaningful for young people because they are not accustomed to camping. We had 430 young people camping together. That was a great experience for the younger people. That was the idea of Prof. Ishikawa.

This is QCS news. We used to have club activities onboard and this was the newspaper club activity. Everyone has to join one of those club activities. On 13 July 1973, Prof. Ishikawa became 58 years old, and at that time, he happened to be onboard the ship so we had a birthday party for him. When Prof. Ishikawa was on board, the atmosphere became very bright and cheerful. Until around 9 o'clock at night we would have discussion sessions and after that we would have a drink together to discuss things

further. It was so active at that time.

Genba to QC magazine, and seminars for QC Circle

Genba to QC magazine changed the name to *FQC* magazine, then to *QC Circle* magazine, again. QC circle-related seminars were also held at various levels. For example, we held the QC Circle Promoter Course, QC Circle Top Management Course, QC Circle Leader Course, and QC Circle Manager Course. Prof. Ishikawa always selected the curriculum and the instructors. He was always actively advising us. In particular, after the lectures of the QC Circle Top Management Course, we used to have a reception with a drink and Prof. Ishikawa was always there with us.

Establishment of the QC Circle Okinawa Regional Chapter

In 1984, we opened the Okinawa regional chapter. We had always wanted to open a chapter in Okinawa. This is the party at that time, if you can remember this. This is really nostalgic. You may know some of the members: Dr. Kusaba, Dr. Nakazato, Dr. Shimizu, and the president of JUSE, Mr. Suzue.

Deployment of QC Circle to Administration, Sales and Service department, and the future of QC Circle

Also, we expanded the QC circles to include administration, sales, and service related functions. At this time of publishing the 25th-year commemorative issue of the QC Circle, Prof. Ishikawa said that the reason why QC circles had become so active was because of TQC, which was really in line with our humanitarian approach, and because the managers were at the core of the activities, many people were dedicated to these activities. That really contributed to the prosperity of the QC circle activities. TQC and QC circles have to continue forever for a better society. This Q frag is to commemorate the 25th anniversary of QC Circle activities, and here are the names of Prof. Nishibori and Prof. Ishikawa, along with Mr. Suzue, Dr. Imaizumi, Dr. Oba, Dr. Shimizu and Dr. Nakazato. All of them participated and signed this.

Dissemination of QC Circle to the world

To disseminate QC circle activities globally, we dispatched a study team in 1965 and 1968, for QC circle activities. We also held the International Convention on QC Circles in 1978. “QC Circle Koryo” and “How to Operate QC Circle” were translated into English, which later became available in French, Korean, Chinese, Indonesian, Spanish, Portuguese, and many different languages. QC circle activities were

disseminated all over the world.

Prof. Ishikawa: the Father of QC Circle

This is a picture from 1975. We went to Taiwan with Prof. Ishikawa. This is in front of Gugong museum and Prof. Ishikawa is here. Here is a picture of Tienhsyang, Taroko Valley. We also went to China and here is Prof. Ishikawa. I think this one was taken in England. Now QC circles have grown to be so prosperous and that is because of Prof. Ishikawa's activities. Without Prof. Ishikawa, there would be no QC circles in Japan or throughout the world, and if there were no QC circles, the problem-solving capability of the frontline people would not be so significant. That was because of Prof. Ishikawa's instruction and teaching. If Prof. Ishikawa had not been here, there would be no kaizen activity and there would be no TQM in Japan. This concludes my speech as my time has run out. Thank you very much.